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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001215

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/24/13

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SUBJECT: DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, SAME CONCLUSION: THE USG
MUST PUSH NOW TO SOLVE THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM. REASONS: 1.5 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. On February 24th PolOff met together with former senator Hosni Ayesh, a Palestinian-Jordanian, and former parliamentarian Dr. Ahmad Ennab, an East-Banker. The two men differed in their background, reasoning and style of discourse. Both however, arrived at the same conclusion: The US should not expect support from the Arab world on anything, including a war against Saddam Hussein, until it moves forward to help achieve peace in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. END SUMMARY.

AYESH: GIVE US JUSTICE IN PALESTINE
AND I'LL MARCH WITH YOU INTO BAGHDAD

[1](#)2. (C) Despite PolOff's attempts to discuss the newly-formed Center for Human Rights, Ayesh immediately veered into a twenty-minute invective on USG policy failures. PolOff (and Dr. Ennab) were helpless to steer the discourse. Much of Ayesh's commentary was polemic and ad hominem; why, he asked, are Americans not concerned that USG policy is now directed by former "Netanyahu hawks"; why are Arabs unsafe in America now with "thousands" rounded up; why not target the human rights record of Saudi Arabia before Iraq... As the smoke cleared, Ayesh said he would gladly join an American army marching into Baghdad if America adopted a "fair" policy on the Israel/Palestinian crisis. This, he exclaimed, is the view of most Palestinians.

ENNAB: YOU WALKED ON THE MOON BUT
NOW YOU CANNOT EVEN WALK ON THE EARTH

[1](#)3. (C) Dr. Ennab delivered his arguments with composure and in a somewhat detached fashion. America is the greatest power on Earth for many reasons, he said. "You walked on the moon," he said softly. But these days, "you cannot even walk on Earth without angering the rest of the world." As Ayesh left the room to take a telephone call, Dr. Ennab told PolOff, "Personally I'm for the war. We need the change and it would be probably be good for Jordan. But, you'll never win the Arab street on anything, not even on support against a guy like Saddam, until you work out the Palestinian problem." Palestinians care about their brethren while other Arabs care about refugee inflows resulting from Israeli policies, he said. He noted that while Saddam is not popular, the Iraqi regime has effectively managed to convey support for Palestinians while portraying itself as a "victim" of the very same western "humiliation" that has beset the Palestinians. The result here is a shift in focus away from Saddam's crimes and toward the motives of the USG.

COMMENT

4.(C) Ayesh and Dr. Ennab, long-time friends, faithfully articulated their "East Banker" and "Palestinian" perspectives. Despite different starting points, ultimately the two arrive at a conclusion which is held nearly universally here: the US must move forward on the Israeli/Palestinian crisis before it will be able to quell growing anti-American sentiment, much less win acceptance of the need for military action in Iraq.

[1](#)5. (C) BIO NOTES. Hosni Ayesh is a former senator originally from Nablus. Prior to his appointment to the senate he was a teacher (in Nablus), lecturer and author of many articles and a book on democracy in the Arab world. On February 18, he was selected to be on the Council of Trustees for the newly formed National Center for Human Rights. Ayesh occasionally appears on Al-Jazeera and contributes to Al-Rai newspaper. He pushed his points aggressively with PolOff. Dr. Ennab is an East-Banker and former parliamentarian from Ajlun. He is now a retired dermatologist, and is a long-time embassy contact. Dr. Ennab was composed, willing to listen, and more at ease when discussing the controversial topics of Iraq and the Israel/Palestinian conflict.
GNEHM